

June 14, 2006

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WASHINGTON, DC- U.S. Rep. Charlie Melancon, ranking member on the bipartisan House Katrina Select Committee, made the following statement regarding the testimony of witnesses from the Government Accounting Office before the House Committee on Homeland Security today about incidents of fraud in the Federal Emergency Management Agency's expedited assistance payments to victims of Hurricane Katrina:

"I am outraged that FEMA allowed such rampant fraud, which is even more appalling given that thousands of truly needy people are still waiting for disaster assistance. FEMA's mismanagement and incompetence cheated American taxpayers and harmed, to a much greater extent, all the people who lost their homes, their businesses, and their communities to Katrina and Rita's wrath.

"While the Southeast recovers from Tropical Storm Alberto, I urge my fellow members of Congress to remember the many people on the Gulf Coast who are still vulnerable to severe weather due to the destruction caused by last year's hurricane season. Whether they lack protection from flooding due to damaged or inadequate levee systems, or are still living in FEMA trailers that can't sustain high winds, or reside in communities without public transit for emergency evacuations, they need our help - and they need it now."

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